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ABSTRACT

Aspects of recent changes in Australian higher education are explored, with focus on the Dawkins Agenda, which is related to the current political and economic situation. Questions about the success of John Dawkins, Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, in regard to higher education are raised (why he has been successful and what results may last). The main elements of Dawkins reform agenda include: consolidation of institutions via amalgamation to form larger units; abolition of the binary system and replacement by a unified national system of higher education; more emphasis on fields of importance to economic recovery and growth (i.e. applied and computer science and business); and changes to governing bodies to make them more like boards of companies. The Dawkins approach with an international context fits closely with directions being followed by higher education systems in other industrialized western nations. In 18 months, John Dawkins has made impressive progress toward his goals. The binary system is officially gone, several institutions have been part of mergers, and new growth is being funded at improved rates per student unit. Dawkins is putting renewed energy into achieving his objectives, and he has gained cooperation of the relevant Ministers in the two largest states. Relations between the federal government and the higher education community remain important, and the Dawkins reform agenda has secured strong support, though there is evidence of a change of mood. Contains 14 references. (SM)

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'The Dawkins Reconstruction of Australian Higher Education'

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Introduction

Australian higher education currently is undergoing a period of rapid and extensive change. This change promises to modify significantly the structure and overall direction of the higher education system nationally, and, at institutional level, affect to a major degree governance and management arrangements, the organisation of research, and financial relations with the Federal Government.

Change, of course, is no new theme in Australian higher education, particularly in recent years. Over the past four decades, essentially a collection of half a dozen or so state government universities and a group of small, underfunded and largely undistinguished non-degree granting colleges have been transformed into a relatively strong, national system of higher education, having a total enrolment of well over 400,000 students. Major changes over this period have included dramatic expansion in enrolments; creation of many new institutions; major expenditure on plant; expansion of postgraduate study and research; establishment in the mid-1960s of a separate college of advanced education sector, resembling the non-university higher education sector of Britain made up of polytechnics, institutes of higher education and colleges, and the state university and college system of California; and major modification of traditional financial and legal relationships with government, leading to a situation where the Federal Government came to provide all regular financial support and dominate policy determination and planning.

But in the last eighteen months or so, the higher education system has been subjected to more rapid and far-reaching change than ever experienced before. Further, this has been initiated and pushed along by a single Minister, John Dawkins, the Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training. For these reasons, it is no overstatement to refer to recent changes as the Dawkins reconstruction of Australian higher education.

This paper seeks to explore some aspects of these recent changes. First, it aims to set out the Dawkins agenda and relate this to the current political and economic situation. Second, it seeks to explore to what extent the recent Australian experience corresponds to recent experience in other OECD countries, and to what extent it is atypical. Third, it raises two important questions about the success of John Dawkins to date with respect to higher education: why has he been so successful, and what are the lasting results likely to be? However, before proceeding to deal with these themes about the Dawkins reconstruction, it may be helpful to provide a brief sketch of the Australian system of higher education.

Australian Higher Education

At the outset the term 'higher education' needs some definition. It is employed here in its current Australian usage to refer to what are still known as universities and colleges of advanced education. This is a more restricted definition than found in many other countries where the term higher education means either all post-school education, or at least all post-secondary education. In Australia there term 'tertiary' education is currently used to refer to post-secondary and post-school education.

Until the end of 1988, tertiary education in Australia was made up of three clearly-defined and clearly-differentiated sectors: universities, colleges of advanced education (CAEs) and technical and further education (TAFE) colleges. Officially since 1 January 1989 the university and CAE sectors have been merged to form a single unified national system of higher education, but to date the actual changes implemented in abolishing the binary system have been somewhat limited.

Currently there are twenty four public sector universities and together they enrol almost 200,000 students. They were all established under state or territory legislation,

except for the Australian National University in Canberra, which is a Federal government institution. These twenty four institutions range from the relatively old University of Sydney and University of Melbourne (both founded in the 1850s) to post-second world war technological universities (New South Wales and Monash), to second or third suburban universities in major capital cities (eg La Trobe, Macquarie, Flinders), to regional universities (New England, Deakin), to recent creations and/or members of the university sector (Curtin University of Technology; University of Technology, Sydney; Queensland University of Technology; Northern Territory University; and the University of Western Sydney). Apart from these universities, a private university sector is now developing. The best known is Bond University on the Queensland Gold Coast which will take its first undergraduate students in May 1989. Others in planning stage include an Australian branch of the University of Rochester Simon School of Business, a proposed Tasman University, and a proposed National Catholic University.

In 1988 there were 47 CAEs, which together enrolled well over 200,000 students. Established as a separate sector in the 1960s as a result of recommendations of the Martin Report, CAEs were originally designed to fill a gap between universities and technical colleges. They would train middle-level personnel for industry and government and would concentrate on sub-degree courses. But with the process of academic drift, reflecting rising expectations of CAE staff and students, the role of CAEs soon changed. By the late 1970s, the larger CAEs especially closely resembled universities in many respects, and nationally almost 70 per cent of all CAE students were enrolled in bachelors degree and postgraduate courses. While there were a few major multi-school CAEs, generally concentrating on applied science, technology and business, many CAEs were relatively small in size. In 1986 the average enrolment of CAEs was 3286 students, compared to 7392 students in universities. As a result of a long process of amalgamation, the number of CAEs was reduced from almost 90 in the early 1970s to 47 in 1988. This resulted in a marked reduction in the number of very small CAEs; in 1975, 69 out of 81 CAEs had 2000 or fewer students, compared to 16 out of 45 CAEs in 1986 (Review of Efficiency, 1986, p.60). Compared to universities, CAEs have been more dispersed geographically, less homogenous in character, and more applied and vocational in course emphasis. They have included a range of large multi-school institutes of technology to 'single purpose' agricultural, teacher education, health and music colleges. Until recently CAEs offered sub-degree courses (associate diploma, diploma), bachelors degree, postgraduate diplomas, and masters degrees but not doctorates. Unlike universities they were not funded for research activities.

TAFE became recognised as a separate sector of tertiary education in the early 1970s. Today TAFE courses are offered in a network of some 220 major institutions and another 1000 annexes and branches. In 1986, some 886 679 students were enrolled in vocational and preparatory courses, while another 500 000 were enrolled in adult education recreation and leisure courses. While TAFE institutions do not offer degrees, associate diploma awards similar to those in CAEs now are awarded in some TAFE institutions.

Two other points need to be made about Australian higher education and tertiary education. While the early institutions were established largely on British models, in recent years ideas have been borrowed freely from a variety of other countries, especially the United States, Canada and Sweden. At the same time, more recently there has been a much greater effort than previously to develop structures and arrangements to meet local conditions.

The second point is that the whole tertiary system has been influenced to a major degree by changing relations between state and federal governments. The understanding at federation was that education would be a state rather than a federal responsibility. Even today in the public sector, almost all institutions have been

established by a state parliament and are responsible to a state Minister. However, from a small beginning, the Federal role has increased to the extent that now the Federal Government has the total financial responsibility for the provision of regular recurrent and capital funds to universities and CAEs. It also supplies about 20 per cent of expenditure in the TAFE sector. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Federal Government undoubtedly has become the dominant partner in policy determination and planning for higher education.

Dawkins and the Dawkins Agenda

The current Federal Labor Government led by Mr Bob Hawke came to power in February 1983 and until July 1987 the education portfolio was held by Senator Susan Ryan. Under Ryan, higher education enrolments continued to grow and various efforts were made to contain expenditure and seek greater efficiencies. Particularly important was a committee set up in October 1985, under the chairmanship of Hugh Hudson, Chairman of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC), to review efficiency and effectiveness in higher education. This committee reported in September 1986 (Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness, 1986), providing a solid analysis of expenditure and costs, and sensible recommendations for modifications in policy. Even though some of these recommendations commenced to be implemented in the first half of 1987, it appears that in Cabinet there was considerable dissatisfaction with Ryan as Minister and with the performance of CTEC. Ryan was viewed as being pre-occupied with social and equity issues and not sufficiently interested in the mainstream activities of higher education and particularly in higher education's relationship to the economy.

Late in Ryan's term of office economic conditions deteriorated alarmingly and there was particular concern about the massive adverse balance of payments situation. From about mid-1986, public perceptions about Australia's economic position changed dramatically and there was strong public approval for the idea that deliberate and even unpalatable steps had to be taken to correct the balance of payments situation.

Following a general election in July 1987, the Hawke Government was returned to office with a comfortable majority. Even before Cabinet met, the Prime Minister committed his government to a major restructuring of portfolios and departments to form super-departments and super-ministries. Within a few days, the 27 former departments had been reduced to 17 (including one department of little real consequence to provide justification for Senator Ryan, the only woman member of cabinet, to continue to hold a cabinet position) and John Dawkins was appointed as Minister of the new combined portfolio of employment, education and training. This portfolio brought together the main elements of the former portfolios of education, and employment and labour, together with some aspects of the former portfolio of science.

Almost immediately Dawkins moved with relative haste and great skill to initiate reform of higher education in line with the Government's major thrust of economic reconstruction, particularly directed to making Australian industry more efficient and competitive internationally and broadening the country's export base. He had been a senior Minister from the time the Hawke government took office in 1983, holding first the Finance portfolio before becoming Minister for Overseas Trade. With Paul Keating, the Treasurer, he had formed a small group of able ministers, concerned with economic policy and committed to relatively conservative economic views. In addition to his reform in higher education, Dawkins has but considerable energy in initiating major changes in Australian TAFE colleges and schools.

In summary, the main elements of Dawkins reform agenda for higher education are as follows:

(a) Abolition of so-called binary system, which made a clear distinction between universities and CAEs with respect to roles and funding, and replacement by a new unified national system of higher education.

(b) Major consolidation of institutions through amalgamation to form larger units.

(c) Substantial increases in the provision of student places and various efforts to improve student progress rates in order to increase the output of graduates.

(d) Increased emphasis on fields such as applied science, technologies, computer science and business studies, perceived to be of crucial importance to economic recovery and economic growth.

(e) A more selective approach to research funding, with increased emphasis on research on topics of national priority, and substantial increases in research funding.

(f) Changes to the composition of governing bodies to make them more like boards of companies, and strengthening of management of universities and colleges, particularly to give much greater power and authority to chief executive officers.

(g) Major changes in staffing, particularly aimed to increase the flexibility of institutions, improve staff performance, and enable institutions to more successfully compete in staff recruitment in priority areas.

(h) Changes to achieve greater efficiency and effectively of the higher education system, including reduced unit costs in teaching, improved credit transfers and rationalization of external studies.

(i) Moving of some of the financial burden for higher education to individuals and the private sector, and encouraging institutions to generate some of their own income.

A variety of means have been used to develop detailed plans to achieve this program, to win community and institutional acceptance, and to secure implementation. Of particular importance, have been the preparation of a detailed green paper (Higher Education: a policy discussion paper, 1987) which was published in December 1987 and, after extensive consultation, publication of a white paper (Higher Education: a policy statement 1988) in July 1988. But as well, Dawkins has been a most effective publicist in seminars, conferences, workshops and in the media. He abolished CTEC and gave responsibility for program delivery and management of higher education resources to his department, presumably to gain greater control. Dependence of higher education institutions on Commonwealth funds has been used to insist on particular conditions to be met for membership of the unified national system. Dawkins has reduced general recurrent grants to provide additional funds for research, and to provide a reserve fund to be distributed on the basis of institutions' 'responses to specific Commonwealth initiatives or identified areas of national priority' (Williams, 1988, 2). He has put pressure on the states to make changes in conformity to his grand design and has established Commonwealth and State Joint Planning Committees for consultation to secure additional leverage with state Ministers and officials. Lastly, very effectively he used a high powered committee chaired by the former Labor Premier of New South Wales, Neville Wran, to achieve his plan for a graduate tax.

The Dawkins New Directions in International Context

The Dawkins new directions fit closely with the broad directions being followed by higher education systems generally within industrialized western nations. What is different is that in Australia the pace and the extent of recent change under Dawkins has been greater than in most comparable countries.

Four sets of factors appear to be pushing the higher education systems of western industralized countries in similar directions. The first are economic. Since the oil price shocks of the early 1970s, most western economies have experienced periods of marked economic turbulence, which have included severe problems with rapid inflation, challenges to traditional export markets, new competition from countries with lower wage structure, deficits and trade imbalances and, at times, unacceptably high levels of unemployment. Coupled with this has been the need to adjust to new technologies and the emergence of the information society. In the evolving knowledge-based economy, the greatest proportion of new jobs created is in the knowledge processing sector and in services, rather than in material processing. Consequently, higher education and university research are being recognized increasingly as important instruments contributing to international economic competitiveness and to prosperity. These economic motivations have been most obvious in the case of Australia.

A second set of factors have led to pressures to cut government expenditure and to demand greater efficiencies from public sector institutions and enterprises. With reduced or fluctuating national economic growth rates, an ever increasing range of activities to be funded from public revenue, dramatic increases in health and social security costs, and strenthening public opposition to increased taxation, governments have been forced to hold or trim public expenditure in many areas, including education. In a number of cases, this has been associated with the election of conservative governments or, as in the case of Australia and New Zealand, of 'socialist' governments wed to the importance of market mechanisms and increased public sector efficiencies.

A third set of factors flow from the consequences of the transformation of elite systems of higher education into systems of mass higher education and ultimately into systems which could afford universal access, if not universal attendance (Trow, 1974). Elite higher education directly affects the lives of only relatively small numbers of individuals. Even though the provision by governments in terms of funding per student may be generous with an elite system, the total demands on the society are not great. But as higher education systems expand, so they touch the lives of increasing numbers of the population and also lead to much greater financial demands for both capital development and recurrent funds. Hence societies and governments understandably want more say about what higher education institutions do, and how they go about their work. The editorial columns in the leading Australian newspapers over recent years have directed quite a deal of space to higher education, reflecting community concern. And the Hawke government certainly believes that it needs more say about the direction of higher education.

Fourth, there is continuing concern about equity issues. In part, this picks up traditional concerns about access and the need to recruit more diverse student populations. In part, it has been fueled by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. But as well, there are new concerns about the increased need of social cohesion in times of economic difficulty, and the need to recruit students from groups largely excluded from higher education in the past in order to increase the supply of highly trained personnel. Again these themes have been prominent in the case of Australia.

In various ways these pressures have produced similar responses, with the result that the agendas for reform of higher education are broadly similar across western nations. These similar responses include:

(a) *Demands that higher education contribute more directly to national economic effort.* In Australia, the Federal government's expectations were made explicit by Mr Dawkins in his foreward of the Green Paper:

> The effects of social, cultural and political changes, economic adjustments and industry developments are all felt immediately in Australia. Our recent experience in international trade and financial markets provides a stark and irreputable reminder of this reality .... If we are to respond and to prosper as a nation, there must be changes in attitudes, practices and processes in all sectors and at all levels of the Australian community. The education sector, and our higher education system in particular, must play a leading role in promoting these changes *(Higher Education: a policy discussion paper, 1987, p.iii)*

Generally the expectation is that higher education will do more to produce well-trained, competent, specialists, especially in high demand fields, in order to meet the particular needs of business and industry, that research efforts will be more directly related to the development of new products or other income generating activities, and that higher education will work more closely with industry, business and governments. Often it is argued that higher education institutions are too inflexible and too slow to modify curricula in order to meet new needs. Because it is expected that higher education will contribute more directly to national economic efforts, governments tend to want a more direct say in future planning and in determining overall directions. Hence, as in Britain and Australia, long established co-ordinating agencies based on the semi-independent 'buffer notion' are being discarded in favour of new mechanisms. Unlike a number of other countries where enrolments are stationary or in decline, in both Australia and New Zealand recent major reports have argued for increased enrolments primarily on economic rather than social grounds.

(b) *Greater emphasis on science, engineering, technology and business studies courses.* In most OECD countries, over recent years, there have been numerous and loud calls by politicians and senior government officials for increased enrolments in science and technology based courses as well as in other fields related directly to wealth generation. Curiously, however, student enrolments in these fields often do not seem to have responded in the way sought. A recent OECD publication on universities concludes:

> ... on the crude basis of comparison which is all the data permit, it seems to be the case that in more countries than not, the proportion of students pursuing scientific and technological studies in universities has either remained stable or diminished, at a time when many policy makers and administrators are insistent on the importance of these subjects to the health of the economy. Nor is this fall always compensated for by growth in these subjects in the non-university sector *(Universities under Scrutiny, 1987, p.46)*

In Australia the proportion of science and technology enrolments in universities fell from 41.6 per cent in 1973 to 37.7 per cent in 1984, presumably responding in part to difficult employment conditions for graduates in these fields in the late 1970s and early 1980s. But deliberate efforts are being made to increase enrolments in these fields.

(c) *Demands for increased efficiency associated with declining funding per student.* In many countries funding per student has declined significantly over the past decade and governments have demanded that higher education institutions eliminate waste and achieve increased efficiencies. In Britain, for example, after an overall reduction of 15 per cent in funding over the period 1981-84, universities were told to expect continuing resource reductions averaging 2 per cent per annum in real terms for the rest of the decade *(Universities under Scrutiny, 1987 p.20)*. In Australia over the period 1970 to 1976 student load in higher education increased by 25.4 per cent, while operating grants increased by only 15.8 per cent in real terms and academic staff numbers by only 9.0 per cent *(Review of Efficiency, 1986, p.37)*. Measures advocated or demanded by governments include better use of teaching space, all the year round teaching, greater use of performance indicators, changes in tenure and greater flexibility in staff arrangements, larger units to achieve economies of scale and hence amalgamations of institutions, and better management of equipment and physical plant.

(d) *A more selective approach to funding, especially for research.* This selective approach is closely related to the quest for increased productivity and efficiency, but it is also in part related to the wish by governments to have more say over the directions for both teaching and research. Use of a more selective approach to funding demands greater use of performance indicators, as both a means of determining as well as justifying allocations. In Australia it is anticipated that major use of performance indicators will be made in allocations to institutions and within institutions, and the associations representing executive heads of higher education even have produced their own report on the subject. This report understandably stresses that 'indicators are an aid to good judgement and not a substitute for it' but recognizes that indicators will be used and thus it is important that 'universities and colleges should clearly and publicly agree not only upon which indicators are useful, but, even more unfortunately, upon the context in which they should be used.' *(Report of the AVCC/ACDP Working Party on Performance Indicators, 1988, p1)*. Most OECD countries appear to be experimenting with one or more different means of concentrating research resources. For example, the UGC in Britain has ranked university departments on research performance (Kogan, 1987) as one basis for selective funding, while in West Germany funds are allocated to priority areas under the "Special Collaborative Programmes", in a number of Canadian provinces special research centres have been established, and in the Netherlands the Jobs Fund Model has been used to protect high quality research from the consequences of reductions in overall levels of university funding. In Australia the well established programs of special research centres and key centres for teaching and research are being expanded and new initiatives planned with respect to research on national priorities.

In many OECD countries the move to targetting research funding on a small number of institutions has been operating for a number of years. In Canada, for example, it is estimated that nine of the 71 degree granting institutions attract 50 per cent of all research funds available. More emphasis is being placed on evaluation of research performance; in Sweden already a large number of audits have been carried out under the Natural Science Research Council, using specially recruited international researchers.

(e) *Proposals for changes in institutional governance and in academic employment.* In order to achieve greater flexibility and to make institutions more sensitive to government wishes, various changes in traditional academic governance have been proposed, such as stronger leadership by chief executives and reductions in the size and number of committees. Changes in employment conditions for academics are proposed in order to achieve higher levels of performance and to facilitate removal of unsatisfactory or incompetent staff.

(f) *Efforts to increase private sources of funding.* A variety of measures have been advocated or adopted, including increased financial responsibility being borne by

students or their parents (e.g. increased tuition fees and charges, a graduate tax), increased contributions to professional education by employers, increased support from industry and business for research, increased income from consultancy and from the provision of specialist services on a commercial basis, and the establishment and/or expansion of private higher education institutions. The two largest systems of higher education in the Western world, the American and the Japanese, have been heavily shaped by their critically-important private sectors, but now the encouragment of private higher education, especially outside Europe, is very much on national agendas *(Geiger, 1986; Jones and Anwyl, 1987).*

(g) *Demands for continued emphasis on equity considerations.* Demands continue for achievement of particular social goals and for mechanisms to facilitate achievement of these, but there tends to be more talk about priorities and to evaluate new proposals in terms of both social and economic considerations. In Australia, for example, increased student participation in higher education is sought on a combination of economic and equity grounds, but priority is being given deliberately to school leavers over adults.

Dawkins and the Success of his Reform Agenda

Within just over eighteen months, John Dawkins has made impressive progress towards the realization of his reform agenda for Australian higher education. The well-entrenched binary system, which had been a key characteristic of the system for almost a quarter of a century, is officially gone. Half a dozen or more institutions have been involved in mergers and many more mergers are proposed. The promised Australian Research Council (ARC) is in place and funding for research via the Council has increased dramatically from just over $20 m for 1988 to well over $50 m for 1989. The graduate tax idea is now operating as the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. The CTEC has gone, the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) has taken over administrative responsibility for higher education funding, and DEET officers in company with members of the new Higher Education Council negotiated for 1989 education profiles and funding levels with institutional chief executive officers. Funding levels have been guaranteed on a rolling triennial basis, over 40,000 new student places will be added for the triennium 1989-91 *(Higher Education Funding for the 1989-91 Triennium,1988)*, new growth is being funded at improved rates per student unit, and for 1989 almost all the new growth will be in priority areas including business studies, engineering, computer science, teacher education in mathematics and science, and asian studies. Institutions are being pressed to review their management structures and considerably greater staffing flexibility has been secured already as part of the negotiated second tier 4 per cent wage settlement. With government encouragement, the number of 'full-fee' overseas students is rapidly increasing. These achievement are considerable, and are far greater than most observers and higher education leaders thought possible.

These Dawkins achievements to date can be explained primarily by reference to three factors: the personal characteristics of John Dawkins, the strategy he has used, and the support that his program has had from key constitutencies. Of the three, Dawkin's personal drive, his leadership, his ability in persuasion and his political skills should not be underestimated. John Dawkins appears to have a high personal commitment to his reform agenda. He has put considerable energy into explaining and defending his policies, which he done with a high degree of professionalism. He is not afraid of conflict and is prepared to engage in debate with his critics. He is a skilful debater and publicist and his overall strategy points to political judgement and expertise of a high order.

The strategy employed to achieve change has been well-thought out and has achieved results already that many critics thought impossible. Take the case of the graduate tax proposal. Tuition fees in universities and CAEs were abolished by the

Whitlam Labor Government in 1974 and, until recently, the Australian Labor Party was firmly committed to the notion of free higher education for all. In the early 1980s, a conservative govenment led by government Malcolm Fraser tried to reintroduce tuition fees, commencing with fees for higher degrees and second qualifications. But this effort failed, despite the Government's philosophical commitment to the idea of charging fees. When John Dawkins introduced student tuition fees or some form of user contribution on to political agenda, most observers said that it would be impossible for a Labor Government to make this reversal to established policy. But Dawkins proved his critics wrong, and used the well-tried strategy of a committee of inquiry led by a prominent former Labor politician to develop what appeared to be at least objectionable proposal. Despite considerable opposition from students, academic staff and Labor Party faithful, Dawkins then managed to persuade his party and his Government to accept his Higher Education Contribution Scheme. Further, in his attempts to do so, he cleverly turned the old equity debate against fees on its head: his argument was that, unless the more wealthy contributed to the costs of their education, the Government would not have the necessary resources to expand student places and so increase access to higher education. For his major institutional reform agenda, Dawkins used the well tried consultative strategy of a 'green paper' or discussion paper, followed by extensive consultation, and finally by publication a 'white paper' establishing new Government policy.

But despite his personal qualities and strategy, Dawkins would not have achieved his success to date without support from key constituencies and major interest groups. His policies for higher education clearly appear to have strong support in the cabinet, primarily because they are an integral part of the Government's economic strategy. At times there have been criticisms on some details within the Government and within the Labor Party, but overall both seem relatively happy with the broad directions being followed. The opposition parties have attacked particular policy proposals, but on balance they appear to be content with the broad directions being followed. Perhaps more important has been the degree of support from the public and the higher education community. Both the business community and the press see John Dawkins as moving in the right directions and trying the overcome what they have seen, for at least a decade or more, as a deep-seated malaise in higher education. Since the second half of the 1970s, both have been highly critical of higher education believing that it has been unresponsive to changing economic conditions and too inward-looking. Within the higher education community, Dawkins has received strong criticism, especially from the academic staff associations, from prominent professors and from former leaders, such as Sir Bruce Williams and Professor Peter Karmel. In a recent detailed analysis of the Dawkins White Paper, Williams was highly critical of the abolition of CTEC, the new policies on minimum institutional size for membership of the unified national system, the increased Commonwealth Government control over higher education, and the new funding policies (Williams, 1988). But, by and large, there has been a high degree of support for Dawkin's policies from institutional leaders, many of whom would wish higher education to be more useful to the economy and more central to the Australian society (see Harman and Meek, 1988).

Despite the degree of success achieved to date, the Dawkins reform agenda is by no means fully in place, and so it is necessary to ask about the future. Will Dawkins achieve his full agenda, and what lasting results might be expected? These questions are not easy to answer and well informed observers are likely to give somewhat different answers.

The sceptical observer is likely to make the point that, while a great deal might have changed in terms of official government policy and labels, and there are clearly new procedures and administrative arrangements in place, not very much has changed to date within institutions and how they go about their work. In fact, from the viewpoint of many members of academic staff as well as students, it is business as usual. While many grand designs for amalgamations have been proposed, sometimes

by State Ministers, very few additional amalgamations have been achieved, and many particular amalgamation proposals have run into trouble.

This view should not be too readily dismissed. Certainly at institutional levels the visible changes are still not great and, while the binary system is officially abolished, many CAEs are still operating as such and former CAEs are still funded generally at a lower level per student unit than for universities. To date almost all of the ARC funds continue to go to the traditional universities. Moreover, in the early months of this year it looked as if the Dawkins' reform agenda could be running out of steam. The best evidence for this relates to amalgamation proposals. Late last year it still looked likely that major amalgamations would be pushed ahead in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, and South Australia, but in early 1989 it seemed that this was by no means certain. In Victoria progress was halted with a general election in late 1988. Similarly in Western Australia an election made the future of the proposed union of the University of Western Australia and Murdoch University uncertain. Most New South Wales plans were still no more than proposals, and the proposed new university of South East Queensland to combine Griffith University and three colleges met with such opposition from the institutions concerned that a ministerial advisory committee in January 1989 recommended against proceeding.

However, over the past few weeks the scene has changed again dramatically, particularly with action from the New South Wales and Victorian Ministers. In New South Wales, the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Dr Terry Metherell, has announced that higher education will be restructured, with eight universities incorporating almost all CAEs. (Higher Education Restructuring in New South Wales, 1989). Draft legislation has been circulated to institutions for comment, and the bills to create the new 'network' arrangements will be introduced when Parliament resumes after Easter. In Victoria, the Minister for Post-Secondary Education, Evan Walker, has released his 'preferred blueprint' for the future shape of Victoria's postsecondary institutions. Various colleges will be amalgamated with the four existing universities, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology will become a technological university, new combined institutions will be created in the eastern suburbs and in the western suburbs of Melbourne, while the Institute of Catholic Education is likely to be incorporated into a national Catholic university (News Release, Minister for Post-Secondary Education, 1989). Further still, Dawkins has made it clear that he has not lost his resolve. In February 1989 he appointed a special task force to report on amalgamations and he has made it clear that institutions which proceed with amalgamations could be rewarded with special allocations for capital projects, while those states and institutions which do not cooperate are likely to lose out in terms of funding and allocation of additional student load. In a recent speech, Mr Dawkins stated that in a number of cases no firm decisions had been taken yet on allocations of funds to institutions for 1990 and 1991, and the clear message to be drawn was that such decisions would depend on action taken with amalgamations. He also stated concerning amalgamations proposals:

> Institutions who have chosen to address these admittedly complex and difficult issues will be supported and assisted. I would expect state governments to do likewise. In fact, I have written to state Ministers of Education offering assistance from the reserve fund to support initiatives which they believe will assist with mergers. Institutions which choose to stand apart from this process are entitled to do so, but, they must be prepared to live with the consequences in a system which will be more competitive than in the past. (Dawkins, 1989, p.11).

Thus the current situation seems to be that Dawkins is putting renewed energy into achieving his objectives, and he has achieved cooperation and support of the relevant Ministers in the two largest states. Moreover, while his objectives are by no means fully achieved it seems clear that Australian higher education will never be the same prior to Dawkins.

On the other hand, the larger term prospects concerning the reform package are by no means clear. Of crucial importance will be how long John Dawkins retains his current portfolio and how the Dawkins reform agenda is viewed by the leaders in higher education. Dawkins's tenure in his portfolio is by no means certain. He is ambitious and backed Paul Keating in August 1988 for the Prime Ministership. Should Keating become Prime Minister relatively soon, Dawkins may well win the Treasureship which he has coveted. Under another Minister in a Labor Government the broad objectives of the reform agenda of Dawkins seem unlikely to change in the short term. The same probably would be true if the current opposition won office. But without the personal commitment of Dawkins and his drive and energy, change may be a slower process and be less far reaching. In particular, another Minister may well be less enthusiastic about amalgamations and may not have the vision of John Dawkins that the number of higher education institutions should be reduced to about 30.

Relations between the Federal Government and the higher education community also will be important. To date, by and large, the Dawkins reform agenda has secured strong support, but there is some evidence of a change of mood. Should key institutional leaders become more open critics, Dawkins will find the going much tougher. Possibly under the new leadership of Professor Brian Wilson (Vice-Chancellor, University of Queensland), the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee will be a tougher critic of the Minister and his department and will be more ready to make its concerns public.

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